

REMARKS

Applicants thank the Examiner for the thorough consideration given the present application. Claims 1-24 are currently being prosecuted. The Examiner is respectfully requested to reconsider his rejections in view of the Amendments and Remarks as set forth herein below.

CLAIM FOR PRIORITY

It is gratefully acknowledged that the Examiner has recognized the Applicant's claim for foreign priority. In view of the fact that the Applicant's claim for foreign priority has been perfected, no additional action is required from the Applicants at this time.

DRAWINGS

The Examiner has not approved the Formal Drawings submitted by the Applicants. It is respectfully submitted that the drawings comply with the requirements of the USPTO. If the Examiner has any objections to the Formal Drawings he is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned as soon as possible so that appropriate action may be taken. No further action is believed to be necessary at this time unless the undersigned receives a notice from the Examiner.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF INFORMATION DISCLOSURE STATEMENT

The Examiner has acknowledged the Information Disclosure Statement filed on November 24, 2003. An initialed copy of the PTO-1449 has been received from the Examiner. No further action is necessary at this time.

REJECTIONS UNDER 35 USC 102 and 103

Claims 1-6 and 9-14 stand rejected under 35 USC 102 as being anticipated by Saito, JP02002137779A. Claims 7, 8, 15 and 16 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Saito in view of Hosono, et al, JP411278342A. Claims 17-22 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Saito in view of Tschaeschke, US 6,000,715. Claims 23 and 24 stand rejected under 35 USC 103 as being unpatentable over Saito in view of Tschaeschke, US 6,000,715 and further in view of Hosono et al. These rejections are respectfully traversed.

It is respectfully pointed out that the Saito patent was published on May 14, 2002. The present application is a continuation of Application No. 10/378,836 which claims priority to Japanese Application No. 2002-060864 filed on March 6, 2002. Thus, the present application has an earlier effective filing date as compared to the Saito patent.

Attached hereto is Verification of Translation Declaration together with an accurate translation of Japanese Application No. 2002-060864. The Applicants have sworn behind the Saito patent to remove this patent as a reference in connection with

the present application. The Examiner's rejection based on 35 USC 102 has been obviated.

The Examiner has relied on the Hosono et al and the Tschaeschke for additional features that were added to the Saito patent to set forth a rejection. In view of the fact that the Saito patent has been removed as a reference, the Examiner's rejections based on 35 USC 103 have been obviated.

NO PROSECUTION HISTORY ESTOPPEL

The claims have not been amended. No prosecution history estoppel would apply to the interpretation of the limitations set forth in claims in view of the fact that this subject matter has been continuously presented since the original filing date of the present application.

REQUEST FOR INTERVIEW

If the Examiner has any questions with regard to this application, he/she is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned so that an interview can be arranged in connection with this application.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above remarks, it is believed that the claims clearly distinguish over the patents relied on by the Examiner, either alone or in combination.

Since the remaining patents cited by the Examiner have not been utilized to reject the claims, but to merely show the state of the art, no comment need be made with respect thereto.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, reconsideration of the rejections and allowance of all of the claims are respectfully requested.

All of the stated grounds of rejection have been properly traversed, accommodated, or rendered moot. Applicants therefore respectfully request that the Examiner reconsider all presently outstanding rejections and that they be withdrawn. It is believed that a full and complete response has been made to the outstanding Office Action, and as such, the present application is in condition for allowance.

A prompt and favorable consideration of this Amendment is respectfully requested.

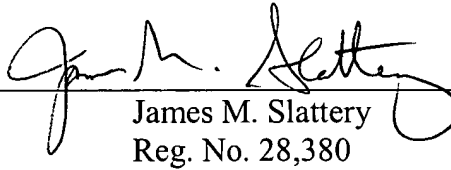
If necessary, the Commissioner is hereby authorized in this, concurrent, and future replies to charge payment or credit any overpayment to Deposit Account No.

02-2448 for any additional fees required under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16 or 1.17; particularly,
extension of time fees.

Respectfully submitted,

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By


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JMS/mmi:ljr

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Attachment: Verification of Translation